


PERCEIVED EMPLOYER ATTRACTIVENESS: The effects of individual  
demographics and experience in practicing volunteering

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Dissertation  
Master in Management



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2018

## **Biographic Note**

Mariana Mendes Carvalho was born in Amarante, on the 28th August 1993.

She lived in Amarante until the age of 6, when she moved to Porto with her parents. In 2012 she started her bachelor's degree in management at the Faculty of Economics of Porto having finished with a final average of 15 out of 20. Three years later, once she completed her graduation, she applied to the master's in management, also at FEP.

During this period at FEP, Mariana joined two organizations: U.DREAM and Gas Africa that helped her to develop her skills and deepen her knowledge by applying what she learnt in classes, in the real-life context. At U. DREAM she made part of the Human Relations Department for two years and in Gas Africa, she had the opportunity to do two volunteer missions during the summer. These experiences helped her to discover in which area of work she would like to have her career, the area of human resources.

Under the ERASMUS program, and during the master, she studied a semester in Kedge Business School, in Marseille, France. After return, Mariana started a curricular internship in a laboratory of pathological anatomy, with the purpose to analyse the costs of laboratory exams in the management control department.

In October 2017, she started her professional career at NOS, one of Portugal's main telco companies, making part of the NOS Alfa Trainee Program.

## **Acknowledgments**

First of all, I would like to thank Prof<sup>a</sup> Dr<sup>a</sup> Luísa Helena Pinto, for all the effort and tireless help. Her patience, empathy and advices were crucial to the conclusion of this dissertation.

I also would like to thank to Prof<sup>a</sup> Dr<sup>a</sup> Teresa Proença, for the interest demonstrated in helping me.

Secondly, due to the motivation and encouragement given, I want to thank to all my friends and family for the support.

Thirdly, I would like to thank U.DREAM and Gas Africa for the impact they had in my life and in my path. No doubt the subject of my dissertation wouldn't be the same if I hadn't had the experience in these organisations.

Likewise, I would like to thank to all the people who participated and contributed to this study, otherwise it wouldn't be possible to conclude.

To finish, I would like to thank Faculty of Economics of Porto for the excellent education and opportunities that it provided me during these years.

## **Abstract**

Attracting and retaining talented people is one of the requirements to attain competitive advantage. Companies and more specifically Human Resource Managers face the daily challenge to develop and run the best strategies to attract and retain the most skilled employees. One of the main crucial factors to attract a talented workforce is through a strong brand reputation, that is as high as the perceived employer attractiveness. Thus, this study examines how individual's demographics, such as age, gender, marital status, education, and volunteering experience predict the importance attributed to the dimensions of employer attractiveness. This research adopted a quantitative methodology and data was collected through a web-survey measuring the perceived employers' attractiveness with a sample of 184 Portuguese respondents. Results indicate that, when choosing a potential employer, individual's demographics and volunteering experience predict the importance they assign to certain dimensions of employer's attractiveness. These findings have both theoretical and practical implications, in particular to Human Resources Managers, since they highlight how different individuals prioritize different dimensions of employer's attractiveness when considering a potential employer to work for.

**Keywords:** Employer Attractiveness, Employer Brand, Individual Demographics, Volunteering Experience, Human Resource Management

**JEL-Codes:** J10, O15

## **Resumo**

Atrair e reter pessoas talentosas é um dos requisitos para garantir vantagem competitiva. As empresas e, mais especificamente, os gestores de Recursos Humanos, enfrentam diariamente o desafio de desenvolver e executar as melhores estratégias para atrair e reter as pessoas mais qualificadas. Um dos fatores mais cruciais para atrair capital humano talentoso, é através de uma forte reputação da marca, que será tão mais forte quanto mais percebida como atrativa a empresa for considerada. Assim, este estudo examina em que medida, os dados demográficos dos indivíduos como a idade, género, estado civil, nível de educação e experiência em voluntariado preveem a importância atribuída às dimensões da atratividade de um empregador.

Este estudo adota uma metodologia quantitativa e os dados foram recolhidos através de um inquérito online que mede a atratividade percebida dos empregadores com uma amostra de 184 respondentes portugueses.

Os resultados indicam que, ao escolher uma potencial empresa para trabalhar, as variáveis demográficas, bem como a experiência em voluntariado, preveem a importância atribuída a determinadas dimensões da atratividade do empregador.

Esta pesquisa tem assim implicações teóricas e práticas, em particular para os gestores de Recursos Humanos, pois destaca como os diferentes indivíduos priorizam diferentes dimensões da atratividade de um empregador quando estão a considerar uma empresa com potencial para trabalhar.

**Palavras-chave:** Atratividade do Empregador, Marca do Empregador, Variáveis Demográficas, Experiência em Voluntariado

**JEL-Codes:** J10, O15

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## 1. Introduction

Companies strive as much as possible to get sustained competitive advantage in global economies. Human resources are one of the main sources and a potential to get that advantage, especially when the selected people have a high level of competence (Wright *et al.*, 1994). For this reason, companies' ability to attract, recruit, select, hire and retain talented and better human resources from the job market become a strategic component of corporate success. One of the factor's that is crucial to attract the best employees is through the brand and corporate reputation (Cappelli, 2001), which have increased firm's investments in branding and Human Resource Management (HRM). The use of branding principles applied to HRM has been termed "Employer Branding" (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004), which embraces a set of efforts to communicate to existing and potential employees that the company is a desirable place to work (Lloyd, 2002). Employer Branding is an emerging topic used to attract potential human resources, since the brand associations have impact in the employer image, which in turn affects its attractiveness as a potential employer.

Despite the growing popularity of Employer Branding (EB) amongst Human Resource Managers and the increasing visibility and relevance for companies, there is a lack of academic research on the topic and few academic studies (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012; Sokro, 2012). Moreover, there is little research on the Employer Attractiveness (EA) dimensions since the literature has been mainly focused on the concepts and results obtained with Employer Branding (Biswas & Suar, 2014). In fact, there are various attempts to identify the dimensions of Employer Attractiveness (Berthon et al, 2005; Roy, 2008) but, so far, the literature disregards the individual differences as well as the EA dimensions that are more important (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012).

Therefore, this study attempts to address these research gaps, by identifying the dimensions of EA that Portuguese people perceive to be important taking into consideration their individual differences, such as age, gender, marital status and education. In addition, the volunteering experience is used in this research to understand if this variable has impact on the perceived importance of the EA dimensions. In fact, earlier reports suggest that volunteering is on the rise (Brudney & Gazley, 2006) as well it is a sphere of activity that is becoming increasing salient for individuals (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). In addition, despite increasing interest in the topic of volunteering, the nature between volunteering and the workplace remains unclear being wise for organizations to understand how volunteer and

work domains relate to one another (Rodell, 2013). Thus, the present study represents one step in this direction, examining the effect of volunteering experience on the perceived importance of the dimensions of EA.

In sum, this study attempts to answer an important research question: *Do age, gender, marital status, education level and volunteering experience affect the perceived importance attributed to the employer attractiveness dimensions?*

To answer this question a literature review was conducted and the topics of Employer Branding and Employer Attractiveness are presented in section II. Next, a quantitative methodology was conducted through a questionnaire adopting the Employer Attractiveness Scale instrument created by Berthon *et al.* (2005). The results indicated significant effects on the perceived importance levels of the dimensions of Employer Attractiveness concerning the gender, marital status, education level and individual's experience of volunteering but no significant effects exist concerning the individual's age.

Overall, this study results contribute to the literature by showing that individuals differences are important predictors of the perceived importance attributed to Employer Attractiveness dimensions suggesting that these variables are also important to predict career behaviours (London, 1983). In addition to the contributions of literature, the findings of this study have practical implications for HRM, namely for HR professionals and recruiters. In fact, knowing which factors attract different individuals enable companies to adapt their management's mode of operations on the way they communicate, recruit, manage, motivate and retain employees to remain competitive in the marketplace (Marston, 2010).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Employer Branding and Human Resource Management**

In order to survive in a global and competitive marketplace, as well as to obtain economic profit, companies strive as much as possible to get sustained competitive advantage (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013). According with Wright *et al.* (1994), Human Resources are always a potential to get that advantage, as long as, they possess a high level of competence. Thus, if companies find, hire and hold the better human resources and combine their talents with the companies' processes, that advantage can be gained and persisted (Boxall, 1996). Cappelli (2001) affirmed that one of the factors that are crucial to attract the best employees is the brand and corporate reputation. Also, Sivertzen *et al.* (2013) referred that its importance has recently become salient in the recruitment process, being the employer branding an emerging topic to attract potential human resources. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) corroborates the fact that firms are using Employer Branding to attract new recruits as well as to assure that the current workers are engaged in the strategy and culture of the company. Many organizations have already experienced that an effective employer branding creates competitive advantage, which makes it easier to attract and retain employees (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). While the term "*branding*" has been mostly used to focus firms' branding efforts to develop products or corporate brands, branding can also be used in HRM, through the term "*employer branding*". This construct names the application of branding principles to Human Resource Management (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004), which focuses an orientation towards employment and defines organization's identity as an employer.

### **2.2. Employer Branding and Employer Attractiveness**

Berthon *et al.* (2005) stated that "*the more attractive an employer is perceived to be by potential employees, the stronger that particular organisation's employer brand*" (p.156). In other words, the Employer Attractiveness will be as high as closer are the attributes desired by the prospective applicants to the value propositions offered by an organisation (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

Martin *et al.* (2005) define Employer Branding as the way people evaluate a company as an employer as well as the way the organization exposes itself also as an employer. Other definitions state that Employer Branding is a way to reinforce that an organization is a good place to work and it is defined as "*a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm*" (Sullivan,

2004, p.1). On the other hand, Lloyd (2002) (cited in Berthon et al. 2005, p. 153) describes the concept as the “*sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work*”. Also, Dell *et al.* (2001) defined Employer Branding as the set of behaviours, policies and values that a company follows in order to attract, motivate and retain current and potential employees.

In fact, Employer Branding and Employer Attractiveness are closely related concepts and the latter may be thought of as an antecedent of the first (Berthon et al, 2005). Even so, Employer Branding is still evolving as a concept (Leekha et al, 2014). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) stated, for instance, that employer brand associations have impact in the employer image, which consequently affects the attractiveness of the organization to potential employees.

However, there are authors that differentiate employer branding in internal brand and external brand, in which the first one is related with the employer brand loyalty among the current employees, while external employer branding is related with the employer attractiveness for the potential employees (Leekha *et al.*, 2014). Previously, Minchington (2007) defended that promoting the brand within the organization would lead to a stronger loyalty from the employee, while the promotion of the brand outside the organization would make the organization more attractive to new employees, which leads to the conclusion that employer attractiveness is mostly an output of the external employer branding.

Regarding EA, it is also important to refer that there is another related concept that is Job Satisfaction. There are many studies in the literature relating job satisfaction with individual's differences (Janson & Martin, 1982; Clark, 1997; Allen & Van der Velden, 2001). Many authors defend that satisfaction only applies to outcomes that people have already experienced or possessed (Strong, 1985), while Vroom (1964) suggested that the term is used to describe an affective orientation toward expected results and outcomes. Graen (1969) used the attraction term to name “*anticipated satisfaction for an outcome*”. In fact, the terms satisfaction and attraction both refer to the affect associated with a job, being the difference related with whether or not the job experience has already happened (satisfaction) or if it is anticipated (attraction) (Wanous & Lawler, 1972). Even so, Jiang & Iles (2011), pointed out that Employer Attractiveness is a two-dimensional concept, affirming that internal attractiveness is related with the perceptions of existing employees while external attractiveness represents perceptions of external potential applicants.

Thus, the relation with these terms must be taken into account since job attraction refers to what people expect to happen in future, taking into account various dimensions of their jobs (Wanous & Lawler, 1972).

### **2.3. Employer's Attractiveness: Definition and dimensions**

In the last decade, employer attractiveness research has received considerable attention (Boswell *et al.*, 2003) being a concept that addresses the benefits that potential employees think they could face by working for a specific organization (Pingle & Sharma, 2013). For that reason, it is important for a company to continuously work on its attractiveness to become recognized and attractive in the labour market, since it will, in turn, make the recruitment process easier (Collins & Stevens, 2002).

In the view of Berthon *et al* (2005), Employer Attractiveness is defined as “*the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization*” (p.149). According to the authors, the attractiveness attributes are the factors that are considered by potential employees when they are choosing an employer, which are prioritized according with the potential employees needs and expectations (Cable & Turban, 2001). Turban and Greening (1997) also defined Employer Attractiveness as the extent in which a person would personally seek an organization as an employer and to what extent would recommend it to other people.

Once again, Employer Attractiveness is considered an important concept in knowledge-intensive contexts, since attracting people with greater skills and knowledge is a source of competitive advantage (Tüzüner *et al*, 2009).

Ambler and Barrow (1996) proposed three main dimensions of attractiveness: the functional, economic and psychological aspects. In their perspective, the *functional* dimension is related with the development and/or useful activities, the *economic* is related with material or monetary rewards, while *psychological* is related with sensation of belonging, direction and purpose.

Later, Berthon *et al.* (2005) developed the Employer Attractiveness Scale, in which they integrated the dimensions proposed previously by Ambler and Barrow (1996). The Employer Attractiveness Scale includes five attractiveness attributes that are reflected in the following values:

- (a) *Interest Value*: this dimension assesses the extent to which a person is attracted to an employer that promote a challenging and stimulating job, in an exciting

environment that encourages creativity and innovation to produce high quality and innovative products and services (Berthon *et al.*, 2005).

- (b) *Social Value*: this value measures the extent to which a potential employer is attracted by an organisation that promote a positive and pleasant environment that is also fun, happy and provides good relationships and a team spirit (Berthon *et al.*, 2005).
- (c) *Economic Value*: this dimension takes into consideration aspects such above-average wages, compensation package, opportunities to promotion and job security (Berthon *et al.*, 2005).
- (d) *Development Value*: this value assesses the extent to which an individual considers attractive a company that provides recognition, self-worth and confidence and make it possible career-enhancing experience and a springboard to future employment (Berthon *et al.*, 2005).
- (e) *Application Value*: it encompasses the opportunity to apply knowledge and expertise to others, in a humanitarian workplace that is also costumer oriented (Berthon *et al.*, 2005).

These five attractiveness attributes are an extension of what was proposed by Ambler & Barrow (1996), in which the *Interest* and *Social Values* include the *psychological* dimension, the *Development* and *Application Values*, which correspond to the *functional* dimension and the *Economic Value* included in the *economic* attribute. Given that the Employer Attractiveness Scale (Berthon *et al.*, 2005) suggests a convergence between the attributes classification and the inclusion of the dimensions proposed by Ambler and Barrow (1996), it has been more frequently used in subsequent studies (Alniaçik & Alniaçik, 2012; Roy, 2008; Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013). For this reason, the Employer Attractiveness Scale is the instrument that is adopted in this study.

## **2.4. Employer Attractiveness and Individual's differences:**

### **2.4.1 Demographics: Age, Gender, Marital Status and Education Level**

There is an abundance of quantity studies focusing Employer Branding and Employer Attractiveness and identifying the dimensions of Employer Attractiveness (Barber *et al.*, 1994; Lievens, 2007; Wilden *et al.*, 2010; Ong, 2011; Berthon *et al.*, 2005; Bakanauskienė *et al.*, 2011). However, earlier research disregards the questions related with the perceived importance of the Employer Attractiveness attributes and the perceived level of each dimension, as well as how individual differences explain the importance attributed to each dimension of EA (Almıçık & Almıçık, 2012). Also, Barrow and Mosley (2011) stated that there are different approaches about Employer Brand with the purpose to discover what are the common points regarding the needs, motivations and values among employees and potential employees taking into consideration that most companies are diverse.

Nevertheless, since people are different, they also have different perceptions about the value and importance of job characteristics (Schokkaert et al, 2009).

Bakanauskienė *et al.*, (2011) also pointed out that personality trait-based and characteristics, *"have predominantly showed out to be the more important organization's attractiveness factor and differentiator than specific job/organization characteristics"* (p.8). Furthermore, it is known that individual's variables such as age, gender, education, among others, may reflect individual's priorities or values (Clark, 1997). For this reason, this study aims to examine the relative importance levels of the Employer Attractiveness dimensions and the impact of individual's age, gender, marital status and education level.

#### ***Age***

Many studies have reported the relationship between age and job satisfaction, but despite the abundance, the evidence is cursory (Jason & Martin, 1982). Furthermore, there is a lack of evidence regarding the association between age and the dimensions of employer attractiveness. Even so, some findings about age were reported in literature related with work topics. For instance, it is known that the importance of the intrinsic rewards (such as variety and responsibility or impact on others) and extrinsic rewards (such as pay, material possessions and others) varies according to the age (Jason & Martin, 1982; Twenge, 2006).

Other theories about the age-related differences reinforce the importance of a person's life cycle, responsibilities and changing needs for instance (Jason & Martin, 1982).

Also, “*if age differences in job satisfaction arise from value differences, then it is likely that generational factors are responsible*” (p.1090), which lead to conclude that the generation that individuals are part of, have a different and stable value orientation (Jason & Martin, 1982). In fact, the existence of several generations in today’s workplace and the differences they bring, add a variety of perspectives to the workplace and the necessity of organizations to try to understand each generation, their values and needs as well as their attitudes to capitalize their strengths (Lieber, 2010). For instance, using the example of the millennial generation, when individuals search for a job, they seek meaningful work and a job that make possible to them learn and grow as well as they consider important the work-life balance and promotional opportunities ( Sujansky & Ferri- Reed, 2009), while topics such as altruistic rewards, namely motivation to help others and society through work (Twenge, 2010) has less interest for this generation when compared with the previous ones (Twenge, 2008).

In a study conducted by Wong and Tsang (1999), they found that in general terms, younger employees tend to demonstrate more ambition and career orientation, preferring challenging jobs with training opportunities that promote career development. Also, Alniaçık and Alniaçık (2012) observed that as the individual’s get older they tend to be more attracted by employers who are costumer oriented, and who produce high quality and innovative products and services.

Considering the literature, and knowing that age affect job satisfaction (Jason & Martin, 1982), which is related to job attractiveness (Jiang & Iles, 2011, one expects age to influence the dimensions of EA that are valued (Jason & Martin, 1982). In particular, one expects that age can have an effect on the perceived importance levels attributed to the dimensions of employer's attractiveness, so the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H1:*** The individual’s age may affect the perceived importance attributed to the dimensions of employer’s attractiveness.

### ***Gender***

Previous literature has been devoted to understand the differences between men and women regarding labour market, such as pay level, job satisfaction, among others. For instance, the most consistent findings in empirical labour economics is the fact that there are significant differences between the pay level of men and women (Clark, 1997). In addition, there is also evidence that female jobs have worst conditions in terms of hiring and firing,



job content, promotion opportunities and sexual harassment (Johnson *et al.*, 1992). Other studies have been made based on gender differences such as the study conducted by Clark (1997) about job satisfaction. In his study, he asked individuals to rate their satisfaction levels of their job through specific facets such as total pay, job security, relations with supervisors, among others (attributes that are also included in the Employer Attractiveness scale developed by Berthon *et al.* (2005), but in terms of employer attractiveness rather than job satisfaction). One of the Clark (1997) study's conclusion was that there are several differences in the effects of work values and decisions variables by gender, such as “*job security and relations at work are associated with significantly higher job satisfaction for woman but have no effect for men*” or “*choosing to pay or promotion as the first important aspect of a job has a much larger negative effect on men's job satisfaction than on women's*” (p.362). Wong and Tsang (1999) also found that gender has a role in influencing employee's perceptions of motivational factors, in which, female employees have a higher preference for interesting work, appreciation and praise for the work done, and feeling of belongingness and involvement.

Because men and women want different things from a job (Clark, 1996), and given the gender differences already found for many employment and job features (such as job satisfaction or motivation), this study examines the role of gender in employer's perceptions of attractiveness, expecting gender differences in the importance attributed to certain dimensions:

**H2:** The individual's gender may affect the perceived importance attributed to the dimensions of employer attractiveness.

### ***Marital Status***

The marital status is defined as having a partner or not (Lund *et al.*, 2001). The use of marital status has been used as a proxy for measures of several “productivity” related factors in the labour market (Hill, 1979). Example of factors for which marital status has been a proxy is the labour force attachment, postschool investment, restricted work location and hours (Fuchs, 1971), personal traits relating to success in the work environment (such as stability, absenteeism and turnover rates) (Bowen & Finegan, 2005), or a proxy of differential investment in training and life-cycle labour participation due to the division of labour in the household (Polachek, 1975).

Campbell et al (1976) and Wilensky (1981) noted that the position in a family life-cycle, which is generally determined by many factors, such as the marital state, affects individual work values. As an example, according to Kalleberg and Loscocco (1983) a married person will place more importance on financial rewards than an unmarried, since the factor of being married influence the need for income. From another point of view, Blau (1985) believes that it is possible to view the primacy of work in an individual's life by looking at the marital status of the person.

In addition, in a study among hotel employees conducted by Wong & Tsang (1999) the authors found that employees who were not married considered some of the job-related factors, namely interesting work, feeling of belongness, opportunities for advancement and development and appreciation, more important than married employees. These results lead these authors to conclude that unmarried people are interested in spending more time in career development as well as to look for better treatment among management, while married people has tendency to strike for work-life balance.

Considering the role of marital status in different spheres of employment, namely the importance of financial rewards as well as aspects of career advancement and development (both included, respectively, in the economic and development dimensions of the Employer Attractiveness scale), one expects that the marital status will be linked to the importance attributed to certain dimensions of the EA, as formulated in the following hypothesis:

**H3:** The individual's marital status may affect the importance attributed to the (c) economic and (d) development values of employer attractiveness

### ***Education level***

As aforementioned, there are many studies dedicated to examining applicant preferences for a job and organizational attributes (Newburry *et al.*, 2006). However, there is almost no research that analyse how ability and achievement levels, namely education, may be differentially associated with those preferences for a job (Trank *et al.*, 2002).

In fact, education levels can influence variables related with employment (Newburry *et al.*, 2006). For instance, according with Trank *et al.* (2002), “*students with high cognitive ability and all types of high achievements place greater importance on interesting and challenging work than do other students*” (p.331). In addition, Newburry *et al.* (2006) supposed that more educated individuals

may prefer working for bigger and international companies since it may present more challenging and interesting work opportunities than national firms. Also, Lievens *et al.* (2001), stated that national organizations have more difficulty in attracting open, creative and independent individuals once they find multinational companies more attractive. In addition, it is expected that job applicants with higher levels of ability and past achievement place greater importance to attaining a challenging work than do other applicants (Trank *et al.*, 2002). Previously, other authors found that individuals with high levels of accomplishment tend to seek environments with additional challenges to build and development higher levels of competence (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Spence & Helmreich, 1983). Other reasons why high-level education individuals prefer challenging tasks and situations is because it provides better opportunities to test themselves (Spence & Helmreich, 1983). Thus, if an organization have characteristics that can be expected to facilitate job challenge, then it can be potentially more attractive to high-educated candidates (Trank *et al.*, 2002).

Other studies also found that other characteristics that high-potential and high educated value the most are the opportunity to learn new skills and integrate challenging projects (Davenport, 1999; Stewart, 2007). According to Ratan (1993), the opportunities to face exciting challenges are more likely to be possible in organizations with career paths that offer high levels of employee participation in work decisions. Furthermore, it is also expected that high-achievers display a stronger preference for fast promotions (Kanter, 1977) as well as “*fast track*” career paths (Trank *et al.*, 2012). In addition, also Ashford and Cummings (1983) and Eccles (1994) stated that rewards such as performance-based salary and promotions may be important for high-educational individuals since it takes a form of feedback about the extent of their accomplishments.

Thus, one expects that high educated individuals are likely to be more attracted to companies that provide an exciting environment with the possibility to contribute to the production of high-quality and innovative products, with the possibility to get career-enhancing experience as well as opportunity to promotions and fair rewards suggesting a positive association with the interest, economic and development values of the Employer Attractiveness scale, which lead to the following hypothesis:

**H4:** Individual’s education level may affect the importance attributed to the (a) interest, (c) economic and (d) development values of employer attractiveness.

### 2.4.2 Volunteering experience

In recent years, volunteering has gained important public and political attention, having policy debates taken place focusing on preserving and encouraging volunteering (Dekker & Halman, 2003). However, there is a lack of attention in understanding the role and contributions of volunteers. This information gap was highlighted by the United Nations, through the Year of Volunteers in 2001, which reinforced the message of encouragement to the nations to conduct surveys about the volunteering activities (Hodgkinson, 2003). In addition, considering the growing prevalence and volunteering engagement in people's lives (Brudney & Gazley, 2006), understanding the implications to the workplace and work labour is crucial. However, the relationship between volunteering and the work domain seems unclear, despite the growing interest in studying the topic (Rodell, 2013).

According to the conceptualization of volunteering, it can be defined as “*giving time or skills during a planned activity for a volunteer group or organization*” (p.1274) (e.g., charitable groups, non-profit groups) (Rodell, 2013). From the point of view of Wilson (2000), volunteering is any activity in which time is given in a free way to benefit another person, group or organization. According to Wilson (2000) this definition doesn't prevent volunteers from benefiting of the work done. The contribution of Van Til (1998) refers that volunteering “*may be identified as a helping action of an individual that is valued by him, and yet is not aimed directly at material gain or mandated or coerced by others*” (p.6) meaning in a broadest sense that “*volunteering is an uncoerced helping activity that is engaged in not primarily for financial gain and not by coercion or mandate*” (p.6).

Taking into consideration the several definitions of volunteering and voluntary work around the world, there are four common elements, namely: there is no obligation; the purpose is to the benefit of others; it is unpaid; and it takes place in an organized and planned context (Dingle, 2009 cited in Dekker & Halman, 2003).

In terms of motivational perspective, people attend volunteer experiences with the expectation to fulfil certain motives or functions (Clary & Snyder, 1999). Regarding the motivation that lead people to do volunteering, Stebbins (1996) adds that there are two main motives of volunteering, namely the volunteering as altruism (helping others), and volunteering as self-interestedness (helping one-self). In another perspective, Caldwell & Andereck (1994) outlined three categories of motivations or incentives for engaging in volunteering, namely: purpose, solidary and material incentives. *Purposing incentives* are based

doing something meaningful, useful and contributing to society. *Solidary incentives* are related with social interaction, networking and group identification. *Material incentives* are related with tangible rewards such as perks and memorabilia. However, there are authors that defends that volunteering implies no material compensation, being also defined as an activity that has as intention help other without any obligation in which volunteer doesn't receive any pay or other type of material compensation (Harootyan, 1996). Despite the believe, among some scholars, that volunteering is not truly voluntary if it is remunerated, the debate about the volunteer's benefits from volunteering is still open, being a topic of wide debate (Wilson, 2000).

According to the functional theory (Clary & Snyder, 1999) there are six motives or functions served by volunteerism: (1) *Values*, which focus on the opportunities that volunteering provides for individuals to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others, being the concern for others a typical individual characteristic, making the distinction between those who volunteer and those who do not (Anderson & Moore, 1978); (2) *Understanding*, being a function served by volunteerism that is related with the opportunity to have new learning experiences, to exercise knowledge, skills and abilities; (3) *Social* is the third function that reflects motivations related with the relationships with others, since volunteering may offer the possibility to be with one's friends or to enrol in an activity that is considered important among others; (4) *Career*, is the function concerned with career-related benefits since the volunteer may have the opportunity to prepare for a new career or to maintain career-relevant skills; (5) *Protective*, a function related with the concerns about the motivations involving the ego, such that Frisch and Gerrard (1981), in a study with Red Cross Volunteers, found out that they volunteered to escape from negative feelings; (6) *Enhancement*, a function related to the opportunity of a volunteer to grow and to develop psychologically.

This functional perspective of volunteering conduct people to take into consideration a wide range of personal and social motivations. Also, it focuses the need to take into consideration the match between individual characteristics and motivations and the opportunities afforded by their environments (Clary & Snyder, 1999). Those environments, one risk to say, may also be related with the labour market and the job search.

From a different point of view, one of the most cited reasons to the practice of volunteering is the feeling of meaningfulness that the activity provides (Clary *et al.*, 1998; Wright & Jacoby, 2000). This lead "*people look to volunteering in order to fulfil a desire for significance*

*and value in their lives*” (Rodell, 2013, p.1275). According with several authors, the ability of finding meaning in volunteering leads to the idea that also a job can be a source of meaning (Hackman, 1980; Grant *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, the sense of meaningfulness that derives from activities such as volunteering is a form of intrinsic motivation that guides other behaviours (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to Rodell (2013), this topic leads to question “*How is volunteering shaped by the degree to which volunteers see their job as meaningfulness?*”. Given that volunteering has impact in certain attitudes in the workplace (Bartel, 2011), on can also question: “*How is volunteering shaped by the degree to which volunteers perceived a potential employer as attractive or not?*”.

Another interesting point to add, is related with the fact that, based on the belief that recent generations such as Millennials care more about volunteering and social issues than earlier generations (Jonhson *et al.* (2006), some companies have introduced extensive volunteer programs allowing employees to do volunteer, as a way to attract younger employees (Needleman, 2008).

Given that (1) volunteering has an impact in certain employees’ attitudes in the workplace; (2) an increasing number of companies are using actions to attract new employees, who value volunteering and social issues; and (3) people who care about volunteering and social issues are often motivated by *Values, Understanding and Career*, which are related with the Employer Attractiveness (and the respective scale), the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H5:** Individual’s volunteering experience may affect the importance attributed to the (b) social, (d) development and (e) application values of employer attractiveness.

## **2.5. Research Hypothesis**

Thus, this study examines how individual’s demographics, such as age, gender, marital status, education, and volunteering experience predict the importance attributed to the dimensions of employer attractiveness.

To this purpose, Figure 1 presents the theoretical model and the hypothesized relationships between the individuals characteristics and the dimensions of Employer Attractiveness.

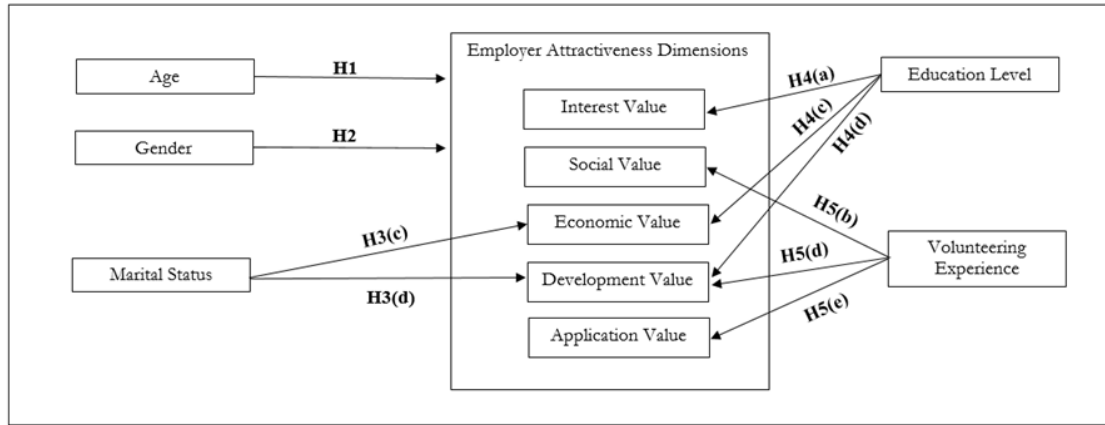


Figure 1– Framework and Hypotheses

**H1:** The individual’s age may affect the perceived importance attributed to the dimensions of employer’s attractiveness.

**H2:** The individual’s gender may affect the perceived importance attributed to the dimensions of employer attractiveness.

**H3:** The individual’s marital status may affect the importance attributed to the (c) economic and (d) development values of employer attractiveness

**H4:** Individual’s education level may affect the importance attributed to the (a) interest, (c) economic and (d) development values of employer attractiveness.

**H5:** Individual’s volunteering experience may affect the importance attributed to the (b) social, (d) development and (e) application values of employer attractiveness.

### 3. Method

This study examines how individual's demographics, such as age, gender, marital status, education, and volunteering experience predict the importance attributed to the dimensions of employer attractiveness. To test the hypotheses, a quantitative research was conducted by collecting data through a survey, which provides a quantitative or numerical description of trends and attitudes of a population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

#### 3.1. Procedure and Sample

The survey instrument was elaborated in Portuguese and made available through an online link with an estimated response time of 10 minutes. The questionnaire was divided in two parts. In the first part, respondents were questioned about their demographics, such as age, gender, residence, volunteering experience, among others (cf. Appendix 1). In the second part, the respondents were invited to rate the importance for them of 25 items, regarding a potential future employer. The answers were provided in a seven-point Likert scale, where (1) means *“Nothing important”* and (7) means *“Very important”*. The main question was: *“Imagine you are considering a new company (or a first company) to work for. How important are the following factors for you when you think about a potential employer?”*. The participation was voluntary and anonymous, except for those who choose to receive a short final report with the study results. The Table 1 describes the composition of the sample.

Overall, 184 adults residing in Portugal completed the survey. The typical respondent was female (63.6%), single/unmarried/widow (84.8%), without children (88%), high qualified (79.9%) and aged 26.95 years (SD=6.87). Most respondents are employed (57.6%), while 20.7% were unemployed/student/retired and 16.8% were employed and studying. Only 9 respondents are self-employed. Regarding their current job, most respondents have a consulting, auditing and accounting (46,2%) occupation, social professions such as nurses, doctors, teachers and psychologists (16.3%), clerical and staff job (14.1%), manager (7.6%) and only one respondent has a middle manager role.

Over 40 percent of the respondents have a gross annual income up to 14 000€, between 14 000€ and 20 000€ (23.4%), between 20 000€ and 40 000€ (11.4%) and only one respondent have a gross annual income higher than 40 000€. The remaining respondents reported no remuneration (21.7%).



<b>Demographic Variables</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>s.d.</b>
Age		184		26,95	6,87
Gender					
	Female	117	63,6%		
	Male	67	36,4%		
Citizenship					
	Portuguese	183	99,5%		
	Other	1	0,5%		
Education Level					
	No higher education	37	20,1%		
	High education	147	79,9%		
Marital Status					
	Single/Unmarried/Widow	156	84,8%		
	Married/Living with a partner	28	15,2%		
Children					
	Yes	22	12,0%		
	No	162	88,0%		
<b>Employment Variables</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>		
Employment Situation					
	Unemployed/Student/Retired	38	20,7%		
	Employed & Studying	31	16,8%		
	Employed	106	57,6%		
	Self-Employed	9	4,9%		
Current Job					
	Students/Retired/Unemployed	28	15,2%		
	Clerical & Staff Job	26	14,1%		
Social Professionals		30	16,3%		
Other professionals		85	46,2%		
	Middle managers/Supervisors	1	0,5%		
	Managers	14	7,6%		
Gross annual income					
	Not applicable	40	21,7%		
	Up to 14.000€	79	42,9%		
	Between 14.000 and 20.000€	43	23,4%		
	Between 20.000 and 40.000€	21	11,4%		
	More than 40.000€	1	0,5%		
<b>Volunteering Variables</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>		
Volunteering experience					
	Yes	111	60,3%		
	No	73	39,7%		
Volunteering type					
	Not applicable	73	39,7%		
	Children (Events, tutoring,...)	16	8,7%		
	Children and adolescents at risk	5	2,7%		
	Health and hospitals	9	4,9%		
	Elder	10	5,4%		
	Homeless	10	5,4%		
	Cultural & Sports Associations	15	8,2%		
	Food Bank (Banco Alimentar, Red Cross,...)	23	12,5%		
	Firemen	3	1,6%		

Missionary and Refugees	19	10,3%
Animal Protection	1	0,5%

Table 1 - Sample Demographics

Regarding the volunteering experience, over 60 percent of the participants have experience, having participated during a period of more than 1 year (26.6%), less than 3 months (22.3%), 6 months to 1 year (7.1%) and 3 to 6 months (4.3%). The respondent's volunteering experience is dispersed by many types, such as children and adolescents at risk, elder, homeless, among others, being the top three types of volunteering the Food Bank (12.5%), Missionary and Refugees (10.3%) and Children tutoring (8.7%).

While participants come from different companies and industries, no significant demographic differences were found according to company provenience.

### 3.2. Measures

The measures used in the questionnaire were the respondents' demographics, and volunteering experience and their perception of employers' attractiveness, which included five separated dimensions, as following.

*Interest value:* Was measured adapting Berthon *et al.* (2005) scale for assessing the extent to which a person is attracted to an employer that offer an exciting work environment, new work practices and use employee's creativity to produce innovative products and services with high quality. A seven-point Likert scale (anchored on 'nothing important' and 'very important') was used to answer five items: "*Working in an exciting environment*", "*Innovative employer – novel work practices/forward thinking*", "*The organisation both values and makes use of creativity*", "*The organisation produces high-quality products and services*" and "*The organisation produces innovative products and services*". The five items scale has a reliability of 0.968, which reflects a high internal consistency and compares well with the value of 0.96 obtained in the study of Berthon *et al.* (2005).

*Social value:* Was measured adapting Berthon *et al.* (2005) scale for assessing the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that enables a working environment that is happy and fun, and that provides good relationships among the workers. A seven-point Likert scale (anchored on 'nothing important' and 'very important') was used to answer five items: "*A fun working environment*", "*Having a good relationship with your superiors*", "*Having a good relationship with your colleagues*", "*Supportive and encouraging colleagues*" and "*Happy work environment*".

The five-item scale has a reliability of 0.965, which represents a high internal consistency, similar to the value of 0.96 obtained in the original study of Berthon *et al.* (2005).

*Economic value:* Was measured using a 1-7 importance Likert scale adapted from Berthon *et al.* (2005) for assessing the extent to which a person considers an employer attractive when it provides above-average salary, good compensations and opportunity to have promotions. This measure contained five items, namely: “*Good promotion opportunities within the organization*”, “*Job security within the organization*”, “*Hands-on inter-departmental experience*”, “*An above average basic salary*”, “*An attractive overall compensation package*”. The five items scale has a reliability of 0.958, as measured by the Cronbach alpha, which is somewhat lower than the original ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ), but still very good.

*Development value:* Was measured adapting Berthon *et al.* (2005) scale for assessing the extent an individual is attracted by an employer that provides recognition, enables career-enhancing experience and a springboard to the future, and provides self-worth and confidence. A seven-point Likert scale was used with the following items: “*Recognition/appreciation from management*”, “*A springboard for future employment*”, “*Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organisation*”, “*Feeling more self-confidence as a result of working for a particular organization*” and “*Gaining career-enhancing experience*”. The five items scale has a reliability of 0.942, as measured by Cronbach alpha, which reveals a high consistency, but lower than the original ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ) from Berthon *et al.* (2005).

*Application value:* Was measured using a 1-7 Likert scale that varies from (1) to (7), with (1) = “*Nothing important*” and (7) = “*Very important*” adapted from Berthon *et al.* (2005). This measure assesses the extent to which an employer is considered attractive when it enables the employee to apply what they have learned and to teach others, in an environment that is costumer and humanitarian oriented. The scale includes five items, such as: “*Humanitarian organisation – gives back to society*”, “*Opportunity to apply what has learned at a tertiary institution*”, “*Opportunity to teach others what you have learned*”, “*Acceptance and belonging*”, and “*The organisation is costumer-orientated*”. The five items scale has a reliability of 0.952, as measured by the Cronbach alpha, which is lower than the original ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ) from Berthon *et al.* (2005).

*Individual's characteristics variables:* All participants were asked about their age, gender, education, employment situation and current job. Besides, several individual variables found in previous studies to influence employer's attractiveness were also added, namely marital situation and education level. Gender, marital status and education were dummy coded

(0=female, 1=male; 0=single/unmarried/widow, 1=married/living with a partner; 0=no higher education, 1=high education).

*Volunteering Experience:* To determine to which extent volunteering experience influences the perception of the employer's attractiveness, all participants were asked about their experience and type of volunteering when applicable. The participants were asked if they have volunteering experience and the response was dummy coded (0=No, 1=Yes) and what type of volunteering (0=Not applicable, 1= Children (events, tutoring...), 2=Children & adolescent at risk, 3=Health and hospitals, 4=Elder, 5=Homeless, 6=Cultural & Sports Associations, 6=Food Bank, 7=Firemen, 8=Missionary & refugees, 9=Animal protection).

### **3.3. Common Method Bias**

To mitigate the risk of common method bias, several actions were taken following Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) recommendations. A pilot-test of the questionnaire was made with six potential respondents in order to determine whether participants understood the items of employer's attractiveness in the way it was intended since, in the original study, the items were formulated in the English, while in the present study, the items were translated and adapted to Portuguese. In addition, the survey provided additional instructions that there were no right or wrong answers.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

All statistical analyses were carried out using the SPSS statistical computer package and a three-step procedure was adopted. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for each dimension of Employer Attractiveness were calculated and are reported in Table 2.

Second, descriptive statistics, average differences and correlations between the research variables were computed and are also reported in Table 2. Third, multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses and assess the extent to which the individual demographic variables and volunteering experience affect the importance attributed to each dimension of employer's attractiveness (as reported in Table 3).

## 4. Results

Table 2 presents the descriptives and zero-order correlations for the main research variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	26,95	6,87		0,05	0,65**	-0,405**	-0,192**	-0,224**	-0,332**	-0,299**	-0,314**	-0,244**
2. Gender	0,36	0,48			0,057	-0,071	-0,194**	-0,061	-0,071	-0,066	-0,048	-0,219**
3. Marital status	0,15	0,36				-0,278**	-0,213**	-0,292**	0,354**	-0,347**	-0,329**	-0,320**
4. Education	0,80	0,40					0,175*	0,261**	0,329**	0,303**	0,277**	0,238**
5. Volunteering	0,60	0,49						0,140	0,169*	0,124	0,115	0,249**
6. Factor 1 - Interest	5,31	1,66						(0,968)	0,897**	0,909**	0,905**	0,885**
7. Factor 2 - Social	5,41	1,67							(0,965)	0,933**	0,939**	0,850**
8. Factor 3 - Economic	5,32	1,66								(0,958)	0,924**	0,870**
9. Factor 4 - Development	5,30	1,64									(0,942)	0,833**
10. Factor 5 - Application	4,91	1,67										(0,952)

Notes:  $n = 184$ ; Gender: "female" = 0; "male" = 1; Marital status: "single/unmarried/widow" = 0, "married/living with a partner" = 1; Education: "no higher-education" = 0, "high education" = 1; Volunteering: "no" = 0; "yes" = 1. Significant at: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . Cronbach's alpha estimates in parentheses, along the main diagonal

Table 2 - Descriptives and correlations among the main research variables

Table 2 shows that most variables are significantly but moderately correlated. Age is negatively and significantly correlated with all dimensions of Employer Attractiveness, namely with Interested Value ( $r = -0.224$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), Social Value ( $r = -0.332$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), Economic Value ( $r = -0.299$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), Development Value ( $r = -0.314$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and Application Value ( $r = -0.244$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). While gender is negatively correlated with the main variables, it is just significantly correlated with the Application dimension ( $r = -0.210$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The marital status variable is negatively and significantly correlated with all dimensions, except for the Social variable in which the correlation is significantly positive ( $r = -0.354$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). On the other hand, education level is positively and significantly correlated with the main variables, namely with Interested Value ( $r = 0.261$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), Social Value ( $r = -0.329$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), Economic Value ( $r = 0.303$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), Development Value ( $r = 0.277$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and Application Value ( $r = 0.238$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Regarding volunteering experience, this variable is correlated positively with all the dimensions of Employer Attractiveness, however it is just

significantly correlated with the Social Value ( $r=0.169$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and with Application Value ( $r=0.249$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

Table 3 depicts the results of the regression analyses. Multicollinearity is indicated by tolerance values close to zero and variance inflation factor (VIF) over 10 (Cohen *et al.*, 2014). As the collinearity statistics for the regression analyses showed tolerance levels of 0.522 and above, and VIF values no greater than 1.041, these suggests that multicollinearity was not an issue.

Multiple regressions of hypothesized relationships between home and destination organizational culture and the dependent variables

Predictors	Interested Value	Social Value	Economic Value	Development Value	Application Value
Intercept	4.616***	5,294***	5,079***	5,539***	4,506***
Age	0,022	-0,084	-0,042	-0,105	0,008
Gender	-0,024	-0,027	-0,031	-0,015	-0.168*
Marital status	-0.239*	-0.223*	-0.256**	-0.208*	-0.248**
Education	0.192*	-0.220**	0.210**	0.173*	0,136
Volunteering	0,055	0,062	0,018	0,017	0,141
Overall F	5.054***	8,451***	7,266***	6,387***	7,915***
R <sup>2</sup>	0,124	0,192	0,17	0,152	0,182
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0,1	0,169	0,146	0,128	0,159

Notes: Significant at: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001; standardized  $\beta$  coefficients are reported after Z-score transformation,  $n = 184$

Table 3 - Multiple regressions for the hypothesized relationships between age, gender, marital status, education and volunteering and the dependent variables

*Hypothesis H1* predicted that age may affect the perceived importance attributed to the dimensions of employer attractiveness. As shown in Table 3, this hypothesis is not supported since age has no significant effect in any dimension of the employer attractiveness.

*Hypothesis H2* predicted that gender may affect the perceived importance attributed to (a) interest, (b) social, (c) economic, (d) development and (e) application dimensions of employer attractiveness. Only hypothesis H2e is supported. In the regression, the results indicate that gender has no significant effect on the employer dimensions except in the (e) application dimension ( $\beta = -0.168$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This finding suggests that woman worth more this dimension than men in choosing a company to work for, which means that they specially value the opportunity to apply what was learned, the opportunity to teach others, and the feeling of acceptance and belonging, as well as customers' concerns.

*Hypothesis H3* predicted that the marital status of an individual may affect the perceived importance attributed to the (c) economic and (d) development dimensions of employer attractiveness. This hypothesis is totally supported. Marital status influences

negatively and significantly the importance of both of (c) economic dimension ( $\beta = -0.256$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and (d) development dimension ( $\beta = -0.208$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As predicted, these findings suggest the marital status, in this case being single, has impact in the way individuals perceive the economic and development dimensions as important values when considering a potential employer.

*Hypothesis H4* predicted that the education level may affect the perceived importance attributed to the (a) interest, (c) economic and (d) development dimensions of employer attractiveness. The results indicate that education level affect positively and significantly the (a) interest value ( $\beta = 0.192$ ,  $p < .05$ ), the (c) economic value ( $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the (d) development value ( $\beta = 0.173$ ,  $p < .05$ ), thus fully supporting *H4*. These findings suggest that individuals with high education will consider more important factors such as an exciting environment, good payment and development opportunities when thinking about a potential employer.

*Hypothesis H5* predicted that volunteering experience may affect the perceived importance attributed to (b) social, (d) development and (e) application dimensions of employer attractiveness. The hypothesis is partially supported. The effect of volunteering experience has no significant effect on the perceived importance levels of the (b) social and (d) development value, thus not supporting *H5b* and *H5d*. However, volunteering experience has a positive and marginally significant effect on the perceived important of (e) application value ( $\beta = 0.141$ ,  $p = .059$ ), which partially supports *H5e*. This finding suggests that individuals that have volunteering experience value the opportunity to teach others, to apply what has learned, the feeling of acceptance and belonging as well as an humanitarian and costumer orientation approach, when considering a potential employer.

As shown in Table 3, the regression linear models were all statistically significant for all dimensions of employer attractiveness: interest dimension [ $F(5,178)=5.054$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2=0.124$ ], social dimension [ $F(5,178)=8.451$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2=0.192$ ], economic dimension [ $F(5,178)=7.266$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2=0.170$ ], development dimension [ $F(5,178)=6.387$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2=0.152$ ], and application dimension [ $F(5,178)=7.915$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2=0.182$ ]. In addition, the results also show some findings that were not hypothesized, such as the relationship between education and four dimensions of employer's attractiveness and the relationship between individual's marital status and the five dimensions, including the application value ( $\beta = -0.248$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

## 5. Discussion

This study attempted to fill a gap in the literature by examining how individual's demographics, such as age, gender, marital status, education, and volunteering experience predict the importance attributed to the dimensions of employer attractiveness. Table 4 summarizes the main results:

Overall results from the test of hypotheses		
Hypothesis	Description	Results
H1	The individual's age may affect the perceived importance attributed the dimensions of Employer Attractiveness.	Not supported
H2	The individual's gender may affect the perceived importance attributed to the dimensions of Employer Attractiveness.	Partially supported (e)
H3	The individual's marital status may affect the importance attributed to the (c) economic and (d) development values of Employer Attractiveness.	Supported
H4	The individual's education level may affect the importance attributed to the (a) interest, (c) economic and (d) development values of Employer Attractiveness.	Supported
H5	Individual's volunteering experience may affect the importance attributed to the (b) social, (d) development and (e) application values of Employer Attractiveness.	Partially not supported

Table 4 – Hypotheses Testing

As shown in Table 4, individual's age doesn't influence the perceived importance of any dimensions of Employer Attractiveness. While previous research suggests that age affect the importance attributed to intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Jason & Martin, 1982; Twenge, 2006), which made believe that age would have an impact on the dimensions of employer attractiveness rated more relevant related with extrinsic rewards (such as pay and material compensation included in the *economic* dimension) such hypothesis was not confirmed. Results shown that age have no significant effect on this dimension. In addition, research also suggested that young individuals would have other preferences regarding the work topic, such as training opportunities and career development (Wong & Tsang ,1999; Alniaçık & Alniaçık,2012), which again was not observed since for the surveyed sample age does not predict the importance attributed to the *interest* and *development* dimensions. Although the respondents of this study were aged between 19 and 54, which represent different generations, the findings do not support any predictive link between respondents age Employer Attractiveness dimensions.



The results also highlighted that gender, contrary to what was expected, just affect the perceived importance attributed to the *application* dimension when considering a potential employer. Research suggested that the gender would influence employee's perceptions of motivational factors in the work campus (Wing & Tsang, 1999) which would be expected to be linked to Employer Attractiveness. The explanation for this result requires further research, since there is literature showing that there are several differences in the effects of work values and decisions depending on the gender (Clark 1996). While this is speculative, this result also may indicate that women are more sensitive to issues related to the social topics, which lead them to also give important to the topics of *application* dimension when considering a company to work.

Regarding the influence of marital status, the findings are indicative that being married or not predict the perceived importance attributed to the *economic* and *development* dimensions of employer attractiveness. In fact, it is believed that looking for the marital state of an individual it is possible to preview the primacy of work and its variables (Blau, 1985). These results corroborate the idea that unmarried people consider more important the opportunity for advancement and development in career, factors that are included in the *development* dimension of Employer Attractiveness (Wong & Tsang, 1999). Yet, results also show that the marital status affects the perceived importance of the *economic* dimension when considering an employee as attractive. However, earlier findings suggest that a married person places more importance on financial rewards once being married influences the need for income (Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983). The effect of marital status, in this study, is significantly and negatively correlated with the economic dimension, meaning that are unmarried people placed more importance to this value. This result suggests further research since it may indicate that nowadays, single people are also more concerned with their financial stability.

This study also shows that the level of education can be a predictor of the importance attributed to the *interest*, *economic* and *development* dimensions when considering a company to work for. As suggested by the literature, individuals with high-education seek exciting environments with challenges to face, as well opportunities to develop themselves (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Spence & Helmreich, 1983). In fact, it was observed that high-educated people attributed a positive and significant importance to the *interest* and *development* dimensions. In addition, and as expected, education also have impact in the perceived importance of the economic dimension. In fact, literature suggested that

high-educated individuals would place more importance in rewards as salary and promotions (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Eccles, 1994). These findings suggest that if companies want to attract and hire qualified people, then managers have to pay attention about issues such as opportunity to career development and good monetary compensations, since high level education affect the importance of these attributes.

Regarding the volunteering experience, it was expected that it would affect the perceived importance of aspects such as *social*, *development* and *application* dimensions in a potential company, since volunteer individuals were expected to place importance to those values (Clary & Snyder, 1999). However, and contrary to what was expected, volunteering experience just affects the perceived importance of the *application* value, which includes items related to social and humanitarian issues. Regarding the *development* dimension, and while this is speculative, the individuals who already practice volunteering may not give importance to this topic when they consider a company as potential employer because they have already learnt and developed these skills through previous volunteering experience, which also prepare for or maintain career-relevant skills (Clary & Snyder, 1999). On the other hand, volunteers have as typical characteristic the concern with others that distinguish them from non-volunteers (Anderson & Moore, 1978) and could be this characteristic that is inherent to them that make them affect the perceived importance of the *application* dimension also when they are considering a potential employer. This finding suggests further research, including a more in-depth research, namely between a group of individuals with volunteering experience and non-volunteers, for instance.

To finish, it is important to mention that these findings also enable to question about other variables than those expected that can affect the perceived importance attributed to some dimensions of employer attractiveness. One example is the marital status, that affected significantly and negatively all the dimensions of employer attractiveness besides the ones predicted in the hypotheses. In fact, it is the only variable that affect all the dimensions of EA, namely indicating that single people are the individuals who value more company's attributes when considering a potential employer, suggesting that these people may be more rigorous and critical. Other example is the education level that also affected the social dimension, suggesting that people without high-education gives importance to items such as a fun and happy work environment as well as good relationships with colleagues and superiors. This will open new avenues for future and deeper research.

### **5.1. Limitations and further research**

This study has some limitations that are acknowledged. First of all, it was conducted with a small sample and thus, future research should be conducted with a more diverse sample before any attempt to make generalizations.

Other aspect of the study is that the survey was cross-sectional, and thus, it doesn't examine the phenomenon of attractiveness along the time leading to new questions as suggested by Reis and Braga (2016), namely "*To what extent do the attributes valued by people actually turn into their employment choices?*", "*Do they vary over time?*" and "*Do they contribute to retain employees?*" (p.113). These aspects may be investigated in future studies.

Other limitation is that attractiveness and the perceived important of the attractiveness dimensions may vary according to different cultures (Alniaçik, Alniaçik, Erat & Akçin, 2014; Newburry, Gardberg & Belkin, 2006) and, thus, it is important to understand these issues in relation to national and regional contexts. Given that the employer attractiveness instrument that was used in this study was developed with students from Western Australia, in their final year studies (Berthon et al, 2005), the underlying factor structure may not apply to other samples, notably of working adults, which requires further consideration in future.

### **5.2. Practical implications**

These findings have practical implications for Human Resource Managers. Firstly, as noted earlier, competition for the best employees became very aggressive and companies need to differentiate themselves from their competitors to attract the best and most skilled employees. Thus, understanding which dimensions are valued by potential employees may help recruiters and HR managers to develop more strategic and effective job advertisements and design better employment offers. Moreover, understanding perceptual differences between individuals with different characteristics that are looking for or considering changing to a new job may help increase person-organization and person-job fit and employment communication.

In addition, companies may target certain employees' audiences instead of others depending on knowing the perceived importance certain individuals attribute to the employment offer. For instance, by looking for potential employees for whom high-education is a requirement, knowing that these individuals value a work environment that encourages creativity or innovation, managers can develop and create the best work

conditions that correspond to the expectations of the intended target. In addition, also knowing this, recruiters may adapt their recruitment strategy by focusing and highlighting the most value attributes of their target.

Other practical contribution is oriented towards the individuals with volunteering experience. The Millennial generation was more involved, than any other generation before, in volunteering activities during their time in high school (Johnson, 2006). In this case, if companies look for recent graduates, for whom earlier volunteering experience is more likely, knowing that these individuals worth the values of humanitarianism and concern with others, even in a potential employer, strategies that meet these expectations can be designed, such as creating corporate volunteering programs and communicating them in the recruitment process. In fact, these actions are already performed by some companies as a way to attract and retain employees (Shelton, 1999).

In sum, by examining the dimensions of employers' attractiveness, this study contributes to the literature and to the human resource management by showing how individuals characteristics can predict if a potential employer is more or less attractive.

## 6. Conclusions

This study attempted to empirically examine how individual's demographics, such as age, gender, marital status, education, and volunteering experience predict the importance attributed to the dimensions of employer attractiveness. For this purpose, an online survey was employed, to evaluate the importance attributed to Berthon et al (2003) dimensions of employer attractiveness, respectively: (a) Interest, (b) Social, (c) Economic, (d) Development and (e) Application; when considering a potential employer to work for.

This research contributes to the literature by providing a different viewpoint on individual differences by examining attractiveness attributes. The questionnaire based of the attractiveness dimensions brings the question to the moment of the employment choice, since it assesses the prioritization of attributes that are offered by employers.

The main conclusion of this research is that gender, marital status, education and volunteering experience affect the importance attributed to certain dimensions of employers' attractiveness. In fact, gender affects the perceived importance of the *application* dimension, in that the opportunity to apply what was learned, the opportunity to teach others and the feeling of belonging and concern with humanity are especially valued by women.

Marital status affects the perceived importance of the *economic* and *development* dimensions, in that unmarried people value aspects linked to an above average salary, opportunity to promotions and career-enhancing experience. In addition, education level also has impact on the perceived importance of the *interest*, *economic* and *development* dimensions, in that the more qualified are the ones who praise the most working in innovative environment that promotes the creativity expression. Regarding the volunteering experience, volunteers give particular importance to employers that value humanitarian and costumer orientation values. Contrary to what was expected, aged does not influence the perception of employers' attractiveness.

In addition, this research has several managerial implications. By mapping these individual's characteristics, Human Resource Managers may set an employer branding within each different segment (female vs male, single vs married, high-educational vs non- high educational, volunteering experienced individual's vs non- experienced) in order to attract the best talents (Turban & Cable, 2001). Thus, companies may adapt and develop more effective recruitment campaigns and design more effective employment offers.

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## Appendix I - Questionnaire

### A atratividade das entidades empregadoras

Este questionário insere-se num estudo académico do Mestrado em Gestão da Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto. Dirige-se a todos os adultos residentes em Portugal e tem como objetivo estudar a atratividade percebida das entidades empregadoras. Para participar, leia com atenção todas as questões e responda de acordo com a sua opinião. Não existem respostas certas ou erradas.

O tempo de resposta é inferior a 10 minutos. É garantida total confidencialidade sobre os dados fornecidos e os resultados obtidos serão apenas utilizados para efeito de investigação.

Muito obrigada pela sua participação.

\*Obrigatório



1. 1. Idade \*

---

2. 2. Sexo \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ☐ Feminino  
☐ Masculino

3. 3. Nacionalidade \*

---

4. 4. Local de residência \*

---

5. 5. Estado Civil \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ☐ Solteiro(a)/Divorciado(a)/Viúvo(a)  
☐ Casado(a)/União de Facto

6. 6. Tem filhos? \*

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ☐ Sim  
☐ Não

**7. 7. Situação Profissional \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- ☐ Estudante/Desempregado(a)/Reformado(a)
- ☐ Trabalho-Estudante
- ☐ Trabalhador por conta de outrem
- ☐ Trabalhador por conta própria

**8. 8. Profissão \***

\_\_\_\_\_

**9. 9. Nível de remuneração anual (ou último) \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- ☐ Até 14000€
- ☐ Entre 14000€-20000€
- ☐ Entre 20000€-40000€
- ☐ Mais de 40000€
- ☐ Não Aplicável

**10. 10. Nível de qualificações \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- ☐ Inferior ao Ensino Superior
- ☐ Ensino Superior completo (licenciatura ou mestrado)

**11. 11. Já praticou/pratica voluntariado? \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- ☐ Sim *Passe para a pergunta 12.*
- ☐ Não *Passe para a pergunta 15.*

**12. 12. Indique, por favor, o tipo de voluntariado que realizou/realiza. \***

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**13. 12.1 Qual a periodicidade? \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- ☐ < 3 meses
- ☐ 3-6 meses
- ☐ 6 meses - 1 ano
- ☐ > 1 ano

**14. 12.2 Com que frequência? \***

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*

- ☐ Mensalmente
- ☐ 1x por semana
- ☐ 2 a 3x por semana
- ☐ Mais de 3x por semana
- ☐ Outra: \_\_\_\_\_

Imagine que está a considerar uma nova empresa (ou uma primeira empresa) para trabalhar.



**15. 13. Quão importantes são para si os seguintes fatores quando pensa numa empresa com potencial para trabalhar? \***

Marcar apenas uma oval por linha.

	1 - Nada importante	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Muito importante
Reconhecimento pelas chefias.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ambiente de trabalho divertido.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparação para um futuro emprego.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sentir-se bem consigo mesmo por estar a trabalhar para uma determinada organização.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sentir-se mais confiante por estar a trabalhar para uma determinada organização.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aquisição de experiência.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boa relação com os superiores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boa relação com os colegas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inter-ajuda com os colegas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ambiente de trabalho desafiante.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organização inovadora - com visão de futuro e novas técnicas de trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Valorização e incentivo do uso da criatividade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produção de produtos e serviços de alta qualidade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produção de produtos e serviços inovadores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oportunidade de promoção e subida na carreira.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organização Humanitária - criação de impacto na sociedade.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oportunidade de aplicar o que foi aprendido numa outra instituição.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oportunidade de ensinar aos outros o que aprendeu.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sentimento de pertença e de aceitação.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organização orientada para o cliente.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Segurança no trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experiência interdepartamental.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ambiente de trabalho feliz.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salário base acima da média.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pacote de remuneração global atrativo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**16. 14. Deseja receber uma cópia com os resultados da presente investigação? \***

Marcar apenas uma oval.

- ☐ Sim
- ☐ Não

17. 14.1 Se sim, indique o seu endereço de e-mail.

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18. Tem alguma sugestão relativamente ao inquérito que queira partilhar? Obrigada pela sua participação.

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